



Office of the Administrator  
County of Kent, 300 Monroe Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503-2206

## **NEWS ADVISORY**

**Contacts:**

<u><b>NAME</b></u>	<u><b>TITLE</b></u>	<u><b>PHONE NUMBER</b></u>
<b>Daryl Delabbio</b>	<b>County Administrator/Controller</b>	<b>(616) 632-7576</b>
<b>Jack Stewart</b>	<b>Emergency Management Coordinator</b>	<b>(616) 632-6255</b>
<b>Lisa LaPlante</b>	<b>Public Information Officer</b>	<b>(616) 632-7182</b>

April 19, 2013

### **State of Emergency Declared for Kent County**

GRAND RAPIDS - Kent County is experiencing the worst flooding in more than a century. The flooding crest is still perhaps two days out, and hydrologists are saying the water will not recede below flood stage until the middle of next week. Kent County Board Chairman Dan Koorndyk signed a Declaration for a Local State of Emergency today. This will allow us to receive damage assessment resources from the state, and is the first step for possible Federal Emergency Assistance.

The Kent County Emergency Operations Center – EOC - opened Thursday afternoon. “Our personnel has been in contact with residents, businesses, long-term care facilities, wastewater treatment plant operators, the American Red Cross, National Weather Service and many others as we deal with this unprecedented flooding event,” said Jack Stewart, Kent County Emergency Management Coordinator.

Sheriff Larry Stelma urged people to exercise caution and good judgment. “As the water continues to rise and the wind gusts continue to affect so many of our residents, we need to remind everyone that safety is a critical issue,” Sheriff Stelma said. “We need people to be prepared for the unexpected.” He provided the following safety tips:

- Do not attempt to drive through roadways covered in water – the road could be washed out or there could be strong currents.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may contain debris, gasoline or raw sewage.
- Softened ground can cause trees to fall, and wind gusts can break tree branches. Be aware of this in your travels, and exercise caution when around trees.
- If you see a downed power line, do not approach it, call 911.
- Please respect our emergency responders and Public Works crews. Avoid areas that are flooded. People seeking photographs or those who want to see the damage first-hand may impede emergency personnel trying to respond.

The flooding could also have a significant impact on homeowners with septic systems or well water. “If you have a well head that is submerged in flood waters, do not use water for “potable” use, such as cooking, drinking, brushing your teeth, and bathing,” said Adam London, acting Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Use only bottled water until further notice.” Once the water recedes, have the well tested for contamination, before allowing potable use again. Test bottles are available at the Kent County Health Department. About 400 homes with wells in Kent County could be impacted.

Until the flooding event passes, we ask all residents, regardless of water and sewer type, to use water very conservatively. This means -

**Flush the toilet less;**

**Shower for a shorter time;**

**Avoid doing laundry, or do larger loads at once;**

**Avoid the dishwasher - hand-wash dishes instead.**

The Kent County Animal Shelter has been assisting those residents living in mandatory evacuation areas with their pets. The shelter has space for pets to be held for seven days. They are also working to make sure any livestock in these areas are evacuated and protected.

“We are taking precautions to make sure that protecting life is our top priority,” said Kent County Administrator Daryl Delabbio. “Kent County Emergency Preparedness Agencies have gone through a number exercises that have prepared us for this emergency event. I appreciate all of their efforts to protect the residents of Kent County.”